Where Do We (You) Go From Here?

The question posed by the book “Where Do We Go From Here” by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a question that will not be answered by the media, on Facebook, or on a blog. The question is answered each day in your mind, your heart, and your actions. Your choices determine your future.

If you are school age and do not require four Federal Marshalls to escort you to class for months, I urge you to choose education.

My sister Jean and classmates including the late former Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, endured challenging experiences at Cleveland’s Collinwood High School during the 1960’s. She and other black students attended the school amidst severe racial tension and violence, and did so without the benefit of Federal Marshalls. In spite of the indignities they chose education.

Sadly, we lost the Congresswoman to illness several years ago, but not before she distinguished herself as an Attorney, Judge, and Legislator; because she chose education.

My sister Jean, who enjoyed an admirable career in the television industry, did so in the absence of a handout or a “Silver Spoon.” She persisted in the presence of a society that doubted her because of race and gender, and despite the bigots that confronted her. In spite of bricks thrown at her and shattered glass surrounding her, she chose education.

As a six-year-old, Ruby Bridges (pictured above left) famously became the first African American child to desegregate an all-white elementary school in the South. When the 1st grader walked to William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans on November 14, 1960 surrounded by a team of U.S. Marshals, she was met by a vicious mob shouting and throwing objects at her.

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CONGRATULATIONS to Ava Dixon for getting a perfect score on her math test. Ava’s mom Jaime, gives her daughter the credit, and even claims “She's good in math...sure doesn't take after her mom.”

We certainly “hear” what mom is saying, but as neighbors of this fantastic young family, it’s clear to us that Ava’s achievements are possible in part because of the closeness and support of family.

The family that prays together and plays together, and celebrates together, and; well you get the point. “Together” is the important link that binds. Just a few photos give an idea of the supportive environment which helps both Ava and her brother Nicholas to excel.

We can always count on smiles, waves, and helping hands. Thanks to Steve, Jaime, Ava and Nicholas for being there for each other, and for being our neighbors.

CONGRATULATIONS to Addison Captain who recently added the Principal’s List and Accelerated Reader Award to her growing list of accomplishments. We are not completely surprised by Addison’s achievements. She is blessed to be surrounded by a loving family that has a high regard for education.

In addition to encouraging education, proud parents Anthony and Stephanie are both high achieving, no nonsense, but “fun” parents.

The family also enjoys a healthy balance between work and play. In the photo below, they are shown enjoying a stroll together in the park.

SNOW WHAT
if it’s COLD Outside, it’s WARM in our Hearts!

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Where Do We (You) Go From Here?

One of the federal marshals, Charles Burks, who served on her escort team, recalls Bridges' courage in the face of such hatred: "For a little girl six years old going into a strange school with four strange deputy marshals, a place she had never been before, she showed a lot of courage. She never cried. She didn't whimper. She just marched along like a little soldier. We were all very proud of her."

Once Ruby entered the school, she discovered that it was devoid of children because they had all been removed by their parents due to her presence. The only teacher willing to have Ruby as a student was Barbara Henry, who had recently moved from Boston. Ruby was taught by herself for her first year at the school due to the white parents' refusal to have their children share a classroom with a black child.

Despite daily harassment, which required the federal marshals to continue escorting her to school for months; threats towards her family; and her father's job loss due to his family's role in school integration, Ruby persisted in attending school. The following year, when she returned for second grade, the mobs were gone and more African American students joined her at the school. The pioneering school integration effort was a success due to Ruby Bridges' inspiring courage, perseverance, and resilience.

The story of Ruby Bridge’s encounter with and impact upon history is one of many that let us and the world know what was possible. The unanswered question of where we go from here rests with this generation.

Each day our decisions set the course of our future, Missed opportunities move us backwards while seized opportunities pay homage to the sacrifices and suffering of those who help pave the way.

Many of today’s challenges to obtaining an education are within our control. Will we bully or not, pay attention to the cell phone or the teacher, celebrate good grades and sincere efforts or degrade them, seek to be the class valedictorian or the class clown, chose to fill the jail cells or the college dorms? In spite of life not being “fair,” the question that remains is “Where Do We Go From Here?"

Black History Month (inseparable from American History) is over at the end of February and many will return to “business as usual.” We can choose to actively participate in working toward positive outcomes, or become spectators in our own life stories, and be driven toward a destiny chosen by others and by "circumstance."

Although this article is directed toward youth, we might all benefit from taking those positive steps (in Education, Attitude, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Civic Involvement and more) that will enable us to have a greater voice in Where We Go From Here.
As we begin to steady ourselves, and get past those failed New Year Resolutions – I’m thinking we need to be reminded about the “you” in attitude. Why? Because I want 2015 to be “our” year of great prosperity. Oh sure – we have had success in the past; however, let’s make this an extraordinary year. Through the grace of God – I believe that can happen.

When we look for it, we can see our own attitude. We can see it in the morning when we wake up, we can see it while we’re getting ready to go to work for ourselves or for others. We can see it when we are by our self or with others. We can also see our attitude when faced with opportunities and challenges. That being said, here are a few of my thoughts on attitude.

1. **Our attitude is so much a part of our DNA.** Would you believe, in spite of how powerful and important our attitude, it is often times easily ignored? Believe it. That’s because, good or bad, our attitude is always within us; and no matter whatever our attitude is, we get used to it, and take it for granted. We say negative things such as, “today just isn’t my day” - “that’s just the way I am” – “there’s nothing I can do about that” – and “no one on this team likes me.” Instead of those negative sayings, we should say positive things such as, “you can count on me” – “if it is to be – it’s up to me” – “today is my day” – and “life is great.” Try it – you’ll like it.

2. **Our attitude is like the air that surrounds us.** It’s that invisible aura we carry with us that is always just there. And since it is always there, as a part of us, we can go days or weeks without even thinking about it at all. In fact, most of us are generally unaware of our own attitudes; and that must change because your attitude, at any moment, says a lot about you. Remember - it is your attitude, how you’re thinking each and every day, that determines your altitude; and whether you are making progress toward the realization of your worthy goals and ideas.

3. **Our attitude is everything.** In reality, our attitude is the role we choose to play out in our life each and every day. Our attitude is made up of our feelings, our thoughts, our opinions, our frame of mind and reference, our points of view, and how we see the world around us. It is also the identity we take on each and every day. In other words, our attitude is the lens through which we see ourselves and our life. Yes - Attitude “is” everything.

4. **Our attitude in circumstances is a choice.** According to Dennis Brown – “The only difference between a good day and a bad day is your attitude.” Each day we all encounter some type of “stimuli”. Based on the stimuli, we will “respond”. Between the “stimuli” and the “response”, is our power to “choose”. We can choose to be pro-active (a positive attitude), or we can choose to be re-active (a negative attitude). And, just in case you didn’t know it, our choice will be based on either our self-awareness, imagination, conscience or independent will. Since our attitude is a choice – I would hope that we all continue “working” at choosing to respond to encountered stimuli, with a more positive attitude; versus a negative attitude. As Zig Ziglar once said – “A positive attitude won’t let you do everything; but it will let you do everything better than a negative attitude will.” “A positive attitude will let you use your abilities – and that’s all you really need.” I challenge you to choose to live with a positive attitude, each and every day.

It is my firm belief that if we focus on our “attitude” (the right attitude), we will feel good about ourselves; live up to our potential each and every day, and do our part, to make a positive difference; not only in our life, but a positive difference in our world too. *Isn’t that really what it’s all about?*
Celebration Weekend!
Henry’s Birthday and Dianne’s Belated Christmas

It was a weekend of celebrating beginning with my Birthday Dinner at Frederick’s Wine & Dine in Warrensville Heights.

Cards, gifts, along with well wishes from well over 1000 Facebook Friends began arriving early in the week, and are still trickling in. I am humbled and grateful for all the love. Thank You to everyone who reached out to make the day special.

Left: A few of the many Birthday cards and gifts.
Below: Master Chef Eric Wells exceeding Great Expectations!

Two days later Dianne’s belated Christmas Gift arrived in the form of Master Chef Eric Wells, with everything necessary to prepare a dinner for seven. True to his word, all he needed from us was water and our stove. There are few words to describe the experience of having dinner prepared by Chef Wells. Rather than search for those words, I will just summarize by saying it was an awesome experience. In my search to find a different Christmas gift for Dianne, I decided to have a professional chef come into our home and prepare dinner.

It was a good decision that allowed me to include several other guests (including myself of course).


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Photo Club Provides Opportunity to Learn, Share, Have Fun

Whether seeking Personal or Professional Development, pursuing a Hobby, or simply relaxing, one never knows what might be seeking them. When I decided in June of last year to enroll in an eight session Photography course at the Twinsburg Public Library, I had no idea that in less than eight months I would be invited to join the newly formed *Pixel Photo Club*, founded by Vicki Jeromos-Blayney, owner of JerNey Studios in Reminderville, Ohio.

Before last summer, my knowledge of photography consisted of (1) Aim, (2) Try to hold the camera steady, (3) Press the button. I have yet to be transformed into “Mr. Photographer” but the journey is proving to be much more fun and rewarding than I could have imagined. Agreeing to accept the invitation to join the club was a no-brainer for me. From the moment I met Vicki, she demonstrated a passion for her craft, and more importantly for the people who relied on her to take the mystery out of photography. During the class Vicki emphasized the importance of having fun with what we were doing. Her ability to focus on what was important to the class, and yet cause everyone to move forward displayed remarkable knowledge, flexibility and compassion toward others. She even arranged to have the photos of our class hang in the gallery at the library for a month. When I thought of myself going from “Mr. Point, Click, and Pray” to having a photo on display at one of our country’s top libraries; well just say “beam him down Scotty.”

It is not surprising that Vicki’s love of photography and people would lead to the establishment of *The Pixel Photo Club*. Always one to encourage input from others, Vicki asked me to help develop the Club’s Mission. She understands the value of synergy. Hopefully the completed Mission demonstrates that membership is well worth considering. There are no dues, no cost, no duties. With just one hour a month scheduled for meeting (and that is optional), being a part of the club is a fun and stress free way to learn and to share.

If the Mission, Beliefs, Principles and Accepted Standards (see next page) of the Club fit you, then you are a probably a fit for the Club. The next scheduled meeting of *The Pixel Photo Club* is Thursday, March 5, 2015, from 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM at the Twinsburg Public Library, 10050 Ravenna Road, Twinsburg, Ohio (less than five minutes from Interstate 480 and Aurora Road, and Interstate 480 and Route 91).

If you would like to attend this meeting to see if the Club is for you, you are urged to RSVP by contacting Vicki at thepixelphotoclub@gmail.com. RSVP is suggested to help plan for your comfort and also provide Vicki a way to reach you in the event a cancellation for inclement weather or other reason is necessary.

*Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever... it remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.*

Aaron Siskind
(Referred to as “Club” in this document)

Mission:
The mission of the Club is to provide a fun, safe and supportive environment where individuals with a passion for photography can share their ideas, increase their expertise, and expand their vision of how photography can enhance their lives.

Beliefs:
The Club believes that Photography . . .
♦ strengthens our bond with each other and with nature.
♦ is valuable in recording individual, family, community and world history.
♦ is an art form that encourages our creativity and expands our consciousness of the world around us.
♦ is educational, recreational and inspirational.

Principles:
The Club operates on the principles of compassionate caring and sharing, and lifelong learning. Members are asked to share their experiences and remain open-minded to the experiences of others. Members are urged to encourage and assist others that reach out for assistance or advice. Members are urged to continually seek additional knowledge of photography and related areas.

Acceptable Standards:
Because the Club will likely involve some family participation, we must insist on a high moral benchmark. Photos shared between members in any manner must be free of nudity, and must meet standards of good taste. What constitutes acceptable standards is the decision of the Club founder.
As much as possible, be in the physical or mental presence of those people that encourage you to follow your dreams; because we "become" our closest associates, our most read books, our most dominant expressions, and those thoughts that wake us up early and keep us up late.

- Henry Ford, Author-Speaker-Consultant -

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For Biographical Information visit: [www.henry.successisyou.org](http://www.henry.successisyou.org)

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